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ABSTRACT

This document brief examines the role of state education agencies in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in supporting school-community collaborations. The findings are based on site visits and interviews conducted in 1996-97 with state-education-agency staff, as well as staff representing other state agencies that address the needs of children and families. The brief discusses the context for school-community collaboration, focusing on the state context, the policy context, and the political factors that serve to influence these contexts. It details the changing role of the state education agency and provides an overview of the ways in which collaboration is defined. The brief also profiles state education agencies and school-community collaboration and looks at statewide collaborative activities for children, youth, and families. It provides examples of school-community collaboration and the special emphasis on extending educational services to special populations and to increase school-linked services. It also discusses ways to integrate school-community collaboration into school reform and how state-education-agency organization affects collaborative efforts. Challenges and barriers to school- community collaboration, some examples of promising practices, and future directions for collaborative programs are all discussed. (RJM)

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ISSUE BRIEF

Ensuring Student Success Through Collaboration

ED 428 459

STATE EDUCATION AGENCY SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IN THE MID-ATLANTIC STATES

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SUMMER 1998

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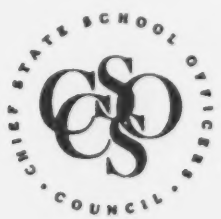

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The research for this issue brief was conducted by Shelly Hara and Lynson Moore Bobo, Senior Project Associates, Resource Center on Educational Equity at the Council of Chief State School Officers, and William Boyd, Senior Research Associate at the Laboratory for Student Success and Professor of Education at the Pennsylvania State University. The research reported herein was supported in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education through a contract to the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory established at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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STATE EDUCATION AGENCY SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IN THE MID-ATLANTIC STATES

INTRODUCTION

Schools can no longer afford to operate in isolation as they work to guarantee educational success and contribute to the overall well-being of children and families and the communities in which they live. School-linked and school-based health and human services programs have sprung up around the country in response to the many pressing problems facing children and youth in our schools today. Such programs seek to build connecting mechanisms for effective communication, coordinated service delivery, and more efficient mobilization of community resources. The goal is to play a role in strengthening families and communities, while working to reduce and prevent barriers to school success and healthy development, such as dropping out of school, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and teen pregnancy.

Schools are also involving and reaching out to parents, community organizations, and businesses to improve student achievement, transform themselves into more vital and effective learning communities, and better meet the special educational needs of their students. They do this by involving community partners in decisionmaking and school improvement plans and by bringing additional supportive services onto school campuses.

State education agencies play a role in supporting many of these school-community collaborations, but the nature of state involvement in local efforts varies depending on how closely the goals of those efforts are connected to the mission of the state education agency, the nature of the funding, and who or what entity has programmatic responsibility. At the same time, at the state level, state education agencies can work alongside other state agencies as partners in larger, more comprehensive efforts to improve services and supports for children and families.

The mid-Atlantic states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania are no exception. This issue brief examines the role of state education agencies in these four states in supporting school-community collaborations. The findings are based on site visits and interviews conducted in 1996-97 with state education agency staff and staff representing other state agencies that address the needs of children and families.

THE CONTEXT FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

State education agencies are involved in collaboration and support school-community collaborations in a wide variety of ways. These include inter- and intradepartmental collaboration, state-district-school collaboration, and school-community collaboration. When examining the many forms collaborative activity can take, however, it is important to consider a number of factors that set the context for collaboration. Some contextual factors, such as social policy trends, set a fertile stage for states to become more actively involved in collaborative activities generally, while other contextual factors affect states differentially and make it difficult to generalize about the nature of support for school-community collaboration across states. These factors include

- the state context
- the policy context
- political factors
- the changing role of the state education agency
- how collaboration is defined

State Context

Each of the mid-Atlantic states is unique in terms of its geographic size, population, history, industry and economy, and politics. This state context strongly influences the nature of its governance structure and its educational system. The variables making up the state context include, but are not limited to, the size of the state (both geographically and in terms of the population), the size of state government, the state's governance structure, the size of the student population, the urban-rural makeup of the state, the dynamics of local and state control (particularly in the large urban centers within the state), the demographics of the population, and immigration. These variables set the context for education within each state and for school-community collaboration.

Geographically and in population, Delaware is the smallest of the mid-Atlantic states, with a student population of 110,000, 21 school districts, and only 172 schools. In contrast, Pennsylvania is the largest of the four, with 2.1 million students, and 501 districts, with 29 intermediate units. New Jersey has 1.2 million students and over 600 districts with 21 county offices of education. Maryland has more than 800,000 students, 24 county-based districts, and over 1,200 schools. In Delaware, state education agency and other state agency staff all know each other; their numbers are smaller than in other states. State education agency staff in Delaware even have the opportunity to work directly and regularly with administrators at the school-building level. In terms of governance, Maryland is unlike other states in that school district lines are the same as county boundaries, so school boards oversee the same geographical jurisdictions as county governments.

Policy Context

The federal and state policy context has undergone significant change in recent years. Health, human services, and education have increasingly collaborated around more comprehensive, community-based approaches to serving children and families. States and communities have been given

new authority and flexibility from the federal government to design and administer programs that meet the needs of those they serve. Even federal education programs that make up only a small percentage of education budgets now allow states and districts more flexibility and opportunities to take more comprehensive approaches to education.

For example, as a part of Delaware's Family Services Cabinet Council, cabinet-level officials representing housing; labor; public safety; health and social services; children, youth, and families; finance; and education work together regularly to design and implement new service alternatives to make it easier for families to access supportive services. In Maryland, the state's System Reform Initiative pools funding from a number of state departments and devolves state-owned authority to Local Management Boards to find community-based alternatives to out-of-home and out-of-state placement of at-risk youth.

Landmark federal welfare reform legislation, signed into law in 1996, is now generating new challenges for all of the service systems addressing the needs of low-income families—challenges that will require these systems to work together if welfare recipients are to be successful in returning to "work first."

Political Factors

The political context also has a tremendous impact on state education agencies' efforts to support collaboration. Turnover in leadership, whether a new governor takes office or the chief state school officer changes, can mean a collaborative initiative's birth, continuation, or demise. When such change in leadership occurs, state agencies may undergo significant reorganization, downsizing, or realignment around a new strategic plan. All of the working relationships among a state's governor, chief state school officer, state board of education, and legislature can have an effect on the operations and structure of the state education agency.

In Maryland, for example, when a new governor took office in 1995, his administration undertook a reevaluation of the state's System Reform Initiative, an effort begun in the late 1980s. This purpose of this interagency initiative was to promote comprehensive local services delivery with an emphasis on community-directed initiatives targeting children placed out-of-home or those at risk of being placed out-of-home. The new lieutenant governor headed a task force to study the effectiveness of the initiative, and as a result, the System Reform Initiative was significantly reconfigured, although it continued to work toward many of its original objectives.

Additionally, larger trends include heightened antigovernment sentiment directed especially toward "higher" levels of government (i.e., state and federal) and the growing public perception that public schools are failing children. In many states, such as New Jersey, state taxes have been cut back significantly in recent years, resulting in budget cuts to state agencies. High-profile court decisions and media stories have fueled the public's dissatisfaction with public schools, and much of this attention to schools' shortcomings has resulted in increased demands for accountability. Schools, districts, and state education agencies are under increasing scrutiny as they seek to improve student achievement, raise test scores, and raise academic standards through education reform efforts.

The Changing Role of the State Education Agency

In the past decade, states have been deeply involved in education reform and have sought to adopt rigorous academic standards while working to assist schools in meeting those standards. With education's long-established tradition of local control, for some districts and schools, the state education agency traditionally has been viewed as a regulator and compliance monitor. However, many state education agencies are working to change their roles to those of standard-setters, partners, and technical assistance providers while building a system of support and accountability. As educators are increasingly striving to improve student achievement by attending to the needs of "whole" children and their families, horizontal and vertical collaboration and partnerships are becoming the norm.

On the other hand, some educators believe that in order to improve schools and education, they should adhere more closely to the basic mission of teaching academics. Some strategic plans emphasize teaching and learning and leave the nonacademic needs of students and their families to others. As noted earlier, educators are under increased pressure to improve student achievement. They also are focusing their attention on more narrow educational issues and pressures, as presented by demands for school choice, desegregation, improvement of failing schools, and effective student assessment. With changes in leadership and the political climate over time, many state education agencies have undergone constant reorganization, and many have experienced a significant degree of staff downsizing in recent years. This has been the case in New Jersey, where rapidly changing demands on educators have resulted in several reorganizations and realignment within the state education agency.

How Collaboration Is Defined

A final consideration is that while collaboration is a widely and commonly used term, it means different things to different people. It is not sufficient simply to focus on collaboration at the school-community level. Such efforts also require attention to new ways that personnel within state education agencies work together, collaboration between state education agencies and other state departments, state-to-district collaboration, and collaboration within schools among the range of professionals who come into contact with students. To some, collaboration also can mean coordination, integrated services, school-linked and school-based services, any focus on non-educational or supportive services, public-private partnerships with businesses and community groups, parental or family involvement, or collaboration through existing educational programs that emphasize and utilize partnerships, such as school-to-work, service learning, extended learning, and before- and after-school programs.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES AND SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

State education agencies involve themselves in collaborative activities and support school-community collaboration for two fundamental reasons. On the one hand, they seek to ensure the educational success of all students, and collaboration is seen as a means to that end. On the other hand, state education agencies also view themselves as key partners in larger, broader-based efforts to ensure the overall well-being of children and families. Generally speaking, state education agencies vary in their support of school-community collaboration in the degree to which they view collaborative activities as integral to their mission of ensuring educational success for their students.

State education agencies participate in collaborative activities in a wide variety of ways. State education agencies may administer federal and state funding for programs that involve collaboration at the school and district levels. State education agencies have initiated a number of programs that involve collaboration between educators and service providers or partnerships between schools and outside organizations or parents. These run the gamut and include, but are not limited to, prekindergarten programs, teen pregnancy prevention initiatives, school-based or school-linked health centers, family service/resource centers, discipline or violence prevention programs, family involvement initiatives, student assistance programs, and school-to-career programs. State education agencies also increasingly involve parents, community organizations, and the business community in comprehensive school improvement efforts.

State education agencies' collaborative activities might be broken down into three broad categories that often overlap in their scope. State education agencies

- are partners at various levels of state government in broad-based statewide interdepartmental coordination or system reform efforts on behalf of children, youth, and families;
- administer education-based, supportive programs involving partnerships that are sometimes focused on particular student problems, but generally seek to improve student achievement, including school-based or school-linked services; and
- support or require partnerships and collaboration as a part of school reform.

Statewide Collaborative Activities for Children, Youth, and Families

Cabinet-level activities. States have undertaken collaborative efforts on behalf of children and families at the highest levels of state government. Each of the mid-Atlantic states has some form of cross-agency collaborative activity focusing on children and families. In each case, the chief state school officer and state education agency participate in some manner. These bodies or collaborations in many instances are governor-initiated or -mandated, as in Maryland and Delaware, but also may be formalized through state legislation, as they are in Minnesota and New York. State education agencies often provide additional staffing for such efforts through interagency coordinators or house interagency initiatives in their support divisions.

Delaware, for example, has a Family Services Cabinet Council made up of cabinet-level officials and deputies representing the departments of housing; labor; public safety; health and social services; children, youth, and families; finance; and education. The governor's office also is represented, and Governor Carper attends alternate meetings. The Council meets weekly. Governor Carper established the Council in 1993 "to develop a statewide family strategy to assure that public and private initiatives are coordinated and focused to provide the support and assistance required for the success of families in today's society." The Council's mission is to design and implement new service alternatives for school- and community-based family-centered services, act as a catalyst for public-private partnerships, reduce service fragmentation, and make it easier for families to get supportive services.

In 1988, the governor of Maryland created by executive order a Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families, comprising the heads of the major child-serving agencies, including education, and the Department of Budget and Management. Each participating department contributes to the Subcabinet fund, which reached $98 million for fiscal year 1997. A new cabinet-level position, Special Secretary for Children, Youth, and Families, also was created, with the purpose of ensuring effective collaboration among the child-serving agencies. Maryland's Office for Children, Youth, and Families provides administration and coordination for the governor (although the office was recently moved to the office of the lieutenant governor). The goal of Maryland's services reform effort is to develop a model of comprehensive local services delivery with an emphasis on community-directed initiatives. The effort has focused on children placed out of state and those at risk of out-of-home placement. As mentioned earlier, the current governor and lieutenant governor convened a task force in 1996 to reevaluate the systems reform effort in Maryland and made recommendations for realignment in November 1996. The effort continues, with subcabinet funding distributed to collaboratives called Local Management Boards for family preservation and return/diversion (from out-of-home placement) services.

However, in some states, the focus of such a collaboration may be narrower or less formal. In 1996, New Jersey's Governor Whitman established an "urban initiative." The initiative at first focused on four urban areas and was led by an interdepartmental working group of high-level officials from state departments, including education. In Pennsylvania, a children's cabinet existed under Governor Casey. Currently, under Governor Ridge, the full cabinet meets monthly, and collaborates in policy groups called clusters. An example of a cluster involving education, welfare, labor and industry, and commerce and economic development is the Workforce Development cluster. This cluster has worked on welfare reform implementation.

Interdepartmental efforts. It is not always clear how collaboration "at the top" affects mid-level managers or line staff in state education agencies. However, such high-level collaborations can serve to keep a vision for children and families more broadly in the forefront of public attention and provide direction for state agency staff. It is clear that state education agencies are involved in a wide range of collaborative activities at the administrative and program levels even if these efforts are somewhat removed from the cabinet-level work. Delaware has one of the most comprehensive efforts; front-line staff in the state education agency appear to be working with a com-

mon agenda and work very collaboratively. But because the state is very small and the staff relatively few, such comprehensiveness might be more attainable there than in other states.

State education agency staff, depending on their areas of specialization, also participate in numerous interdepartmental working groups and task forces that may include those outside state government, such as university researchers or nonprofit organizations. These groups are often housed in or led by other state agencies, such as health or human services, but include the participation of state education agency staff. Such groups include task forces or joint efforts on teen pregnancy prevention, healthy infants and children, and family support centers. For example, state education agency staff in Delaware participate in an early intervention effort called Growing Together coordinated by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services.

Each state also has a Head Start Collaboration effort, which is funded by the federal government but seeks to bring relevant state partners, including education, together to better serve children enrolled in Head Start. In Delaware, the coordinator of the state's Head Start Collaboration is housed in the Department of Public Instruction. In other states, the state education agency is very involved in the collaboration, but the collaboration is housed in another agency or office. In Maryland, for example, it is housed in the Office of Children, Youth, and Families.

School-Community Collaboration

Numerous collaborative efforts make up supportive programs for students and their families. These programs provide additional services and supports to students to help them succeed in school. They include family involvement programs, dropout prevention programs that seek to address or prevent substance abuse and violence, teen pregnancy prevention programs, and extended learning programs. They also include school-based and school-linked health and human services programs.

Educational services to special populations. Educational programs for some groups of children by definition are presumed to be collaborative efforts because they typically involve an array of services and professionals outside the traditional educational domain, sometimes termed "wraparound services." Special populations of children include those with disabilities served in special education, migrant students, and homeless children. These particular programs will not be examined in detail in this issue brief, but it is worth noting that state education and local education agencies are involved in many collaborative activities to ensure that these children receive an appropriate and adequate education as required by law.

Early childhood education or prekindergarten programs fall into this category as well and should be mentioned. Increasingly, state education agencies are attempting to address learning readiness by focusing on the learning needs of children before they enter kindergarten. In 1996, the state of New Jersey provided funding for guaranteed preschool and full-day kindergarten for the state's most disadvantaged school districts. Some 125 districts are receiving $287.5 million under this program. Maryland's Extended Elementary Education Program, a half-day program for four-year-olds that is not mandatory, is funded by the state. It targets mostly economically disadvantaged families, with eligibility and program design determined locally, within parameters set by the state.

Student support programs. Schools provide an array of additional student support services that often target specific problems or at-risk students. Pennsylvania and Maryland each have state-supported Student Assistance Programs that primarily target students with substance abuse problems or those at risk of abusing substances. A typical pupil services team in a Maryland school is made up of two or more teachers, an administrator, a counselor, and a school nurse, with staff from the local health department serving as consultants to the team. Once someone identifies a substance abuse problem, the team intervenes as early as possible with information and referral to services, which the student's parents may pursue.

Many schools have extended-day programs that provide additional academic instruction or recreational activities on school campuses. The Delaware Department of Public Instruction has the only statewide discipline program for all schools, called the Comprehensive Discipline Initiative. This initiative was legislated and funded in response to several incidences of violence on school campuses. It contains provisions for three types of programs: alternative schools, school district or school-based intervention programs, and community-based or school-linked prevention programs for students and families. Community prevention partnerships are collaboratives made up of a wide range of community partners, including school personnel and community agencies, and provide academic and family support services. State education agency staff work directly with schools in a supportive role to administer and implement these programs.

The Maryland State Department of Education has a School-Community Centers Program, founded in 1970, that involves a collaborative partnership between the state education agency and local parks and recreation departments. Each school district receives an allocation for this program, with schools participating on a voluntary basis. The programs offer recreational activities during and after school hours, as well as tutorial programs, homework clubs, parenting education classes, and parent-child activities, and require that school personnel collaborate with local parks and recreation staff.

School-based or school-linked services programs. School-based or school-linked services programs provide an array of supportive health and human services for children, youth, and sometimes their family members. These programs are situated at or near school campuses and are typically supported by a combination of state and local resources, both public and private. The state education agency may or may not be the lead administering agency for these programs, but it is usually at least a key partner. State interagency advisory groups or working groups may be responsible for approving local plans. Delaware has Wellness Centers that are in part state supported; New Jersey has the School Based Youth Services Program; Pennsylvania has Family Centers; and Maryland has School-Based Health Centers and Family Support Centers that are school-linked.

The New Jersey Department of Human Services administers one of the best-known examples of school-community collaboration in its School Based Youth Services Program, a statewide effort that places comprehensive services in or near secondary schools and has expanded into elementary and middle schools. These sites provide health care, mental health and family counseling, job and employment training, and substance abuse counseling. Some sites provide additional services, such as teen parenting education, day care, transportation, tutoring, family planning, and hotlines.

The School Based Youth Services Program is a partnership of the departments of Human Services, Health, and Labor, and the local school boards and the communities they serve. The state education agency, along with other state departments, participates in the implementation of this effort, but only at the staff level. The state education agency generally does not play a visible or lead role.

Pennsylvania has similar Family Centers, "one-stop shops" for school-linked health and human services. These are state-initiated and funded through a combination of state and federal funds. They were once administered by the state education agency, but are now administered by the Department of Public Welfare's Office of Children, Youth, and Families. An interagency management team collaborates around this initiative. The Family Centers have undergone some reductions in funding in recent years, and the focus has shifted to meeting challenges presented by reforms in managed care and welfare.

School-Community Collaboration as a Part of School Reform

State education agencies may support or encourage school-community collaboration as a part of a school improvement effort. In some cases, the state education agency may require that low-performing schools adopt an improvement plan that includes providing supportive services for students and families. Increasingly, especially in neighborhoods with large proportions of low-income students, schools are working with community partners and engaging parents in their efforts to improve student achievement.

New Jersey's Department of Education offers a case study in the evolution of its support for school-community collaboration over the past year. Toward the end of 1996, at the time of our site visit, the state education agency was in the process of bringing its department into closer alignment with the priorities defined in the department's strategic plan for systemic school reform initially accepted by the State Board in June 1995. The agency had undergone a significant amount of downsizing in recent years. In fact, at the time of our interviews, one office within the Division of Student Services was responsible for divestitures, that is, determining which programs or services could be "divested" for administration by other state agencies.

Abbott v. Burke, a long-running school finance equity suit, also challenged New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. In May 1997, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the Core Curriculum Content Standards are a legitimate basis for a thorough and efficient education. But the court also ruled that for the Abbott school districts to meet those new standards, additional funding should be provided to bring them into parity with the state's wealthiest districts. The $246.1 million necessary to do so was provided by the governor and the legislature. As directed by the court, the New Jersey Department of Education then conducted a comprehensive study to determine the special educational needs of students in the Abbott districts and develop a plan for state or state-assisted implementation. This study included a survey of the districts' existing "supplemental programs and strategies," community meetings in each district to determine needs, and a review of research about the strengths and weaknesses of various supplemental programs.

Based on the findings of the study, the New Jersey Department of Education defined required elements for Abbott school district plans for use of the additional funds to improve student achieve-

ment. These elements were based on a number of principles, but a great deal of emphasis was placed on allowing schools and their surrounding communities to determine their own needs and implement a plan for whole school reform. The planning process itself required collaboration among school personnel, parents, the school district, and community partners.

Additionally, the state education agency required schools to take a comprehensive approach to school improvement, integrating supportive programs with their school reform efforts. The state education agency ultimately recommended that elementary, middle, and high schools in the Abbott districts offer "an appropriate social service delivery system which provides health and social services to students and families, within the context of a whole school program." The department also recommended that all Abbott schools implement school-based decisionmaking that involves parents in the school governance process. The state education agency has expressed its commitment to support Abbott districts and schools in implementing their plans and working to meet the core content standards in partnership with parents and communities.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCY ORGANIZATION

As stated earlier, collaboration can refer to a range of activities and programs. State education agency organization may influence the level of intradepartmental collaboration, vertical collaboration from state education agency to school district to school, and support for partnerships within communities. Virtually all state education agency staff stated that they are increasingly working collaboratively within their own departments, which may contribute to making the many programs and activities that involve collaboration more integrated within a larger vision. The general sentiment was that collaboration within the department was necessary and positive, although it is important to consider that state agencies vary in size and in the number of bureaucratic layers that exist within them, and therefore vary regarding the ease with which such collaboration is possible.

In spite of the fact that state education agencies are increasingly involved in collaboration, they continue to be organized or staffed around specific federal programs and funding streams, state-run programs, or programs that utilize a combination of state and federal funds. The funding streams that support school-community collaboration include, among others, compensatory education, special education, Safe and Drug-free Schools, and School-to-Work. In each of the mid-Atlantic states, the bulk of collaborative activities and staff participating in them resides in a single branch of the state education agency. That branch or division might be called student services, student support services, or compensatory education, or some variation. In some cases, the special education and school-to-work programs or divisions are housed outside these support services branches.

In Delaware, for example, the Improvement and Assistance Branch houses most of the agency's collaboration-oriented activities. It is made up of four units: Unified Planning and Quality Assurance, Exceptional Children and Early Childhood Education, Vocational Technical Education and School to Work Transition, and Student/Family/School Support. The Maryland State Department of Education has a Division of Compensatory Education and Support Services, which

includes compensatory and migrant education, school assistance and program improvement, special programs, and parent involvement. The Pupil Services and Drug-free Schools division includes public services, drug-free schools programs, and the career and employability branch. Special Education is a separate division, as is Career Technology and Adult Learning. Maryland also has a School Improvement Services Office and a separate division of Instruction and Staff Development.

Individuals or units with their areas of specialization are responsible for administering grants, writing regulations, approving plans, providing assistance with those plans, and monitoring their implementation. The staff of Delaware's department is small compared to that of other states in the mid-Atlantic region, and therefore each staff member has multiple program responsibilities. State education agencies also may have an individual or unit dedicated to interagency initiatives, as in New Jersey. State education agency staff, depending on their program responsibilities and the size of the state, may work with either district staff or school personnel directly.

It seems to matter less how and where, organizationally, program staff are housed than what incentives and disincentives there are to collaborate with other staff or support partnership-building in schools and districts. For example, some federal or state programs require or expect that schools and districts collaborate or partner with others, and state education agency staff then work to promote or encourage that collaboration locally. The Safe and Drug-free Schools program is one such example.

Having an individual or unit that works solely on interagency initiatives may help to create the expectation for interagency cooperation or collaboration for the state education agency, but it also may allow those outside these units to assume that they do not have to participate in such activities. Generally, it is not safe to assume that these units or individuals will or should address the full range of interagency collaborative activities; interagency coordination and collaboration may be limited in scope and categorical, focusing on a particular population or on specific student problems. In one mid-Atlantic state, for example, the state education agency housed a coordinator for an interagency group focused on very young children. Interestingly, this group also was viewed as a state legislative entity, not one representing the governor's administration.

For some staff, involvement in collaborative activities might be expected, but not seen as central to their primary job responsibilities. If collaborative activities must be conducted on one's own time or in addition to other full-time responsibilities, then in spite of that expectation, there may be disincentives to participate. Strong leaders who expect collaboration also work to infuse that expectation into the organizational culture. Nancy Grasmick, chief state school officer and former Special Secretary for Children, Youth, and Families for Maryland, has a reputation for holding high expectations for collaboration among her staff and with others outside the state education agency. Staff stated that they see collaboration as part of the organizational culture, and they work collaboratively on a daily basis.

As mentioned earlier, reorganizations within state education agencies are commonplace, as they are in public institutions generally. Reorganization may occur in response to pressing needs or crises posed to state education agencies or when there is a change in leadership. For example, the

New Jersey Department of Education's Division of Student Services houses offices of Educational Support Services and Interagency Initiatives; Special Education Programs; Bilingual Education and Equity Issues; Specialized Populations; and Program Review and Improvement. An additional Division of Field Services oversees, among other offices, County and Regional Services, which includes the 21 county superintendents and regional county superintendents who serve as the Commissioner's liaisons with school districts. An office of Urban Education and Policy was once housed in this division. However, when the *Abbott v. Burke* decision led to a subsequent reorganization of the department, this office was eliminated from this division and a new section was formed in the Division of Student Services—the Office of Program Review and Improvement—to ensure accountability and improvement of student achievement in the Abbott districts and other districts with failing schools. A reorganization, then, may occur for political reasons as much as for functional ones, but any such change affects state education agency priorities and how staff work together.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

While state education staff generally agree that collaboration is the call of the day, and professionals widely agree that collaboration is necessary to create the systems of care and vital communities that support children, youth, and their families, there are still many barriers and challenges to be overcome. A number of barriers and challenges to collaboration were noted during our interviews.

Bureaucratic and Cultural Differences Between Education and Collaborating Agencies

Interviewees cited a number of practical barriers that evolved from bureaucratic and cultural differences among agencies and service sectors. These include discrepancies in state and school holidays, teachers' schedules, work days, and building specifications. In at least one state, many school buildings are in very poor condition and are inadequate to house either education or any other school-based services. Those involved in collaborative efforts, from state education agency staff to school personnel to service providers, also lack a common language with which to work together. One interviewee stated that it was difficult even to survey school personnel about the kinds of services they were providing because there was no common understanding about what was meant by collaboration or school-based services. "Turfism," that is, agencies' wanting to protect their own service domains and funding, and duplication of services due to turfism were commonly cited as barriers.

Pressure on Educators to Be Accountable for Discrete Educational Results

State education agency staff find it difficult to address the extra-educational needs of students while juggling the many demands of education reform, including standards and assessment, special education, state-takeover schools, as well as other politicized and public issues such as violence in schools, school choice, and desegregation. While line staff may be asked or encouraged to represent busy senior staff in collaborative activities with other departments and private sector partners,

they may not have the appropriate authority to effect change, make decisions, or take action on behalf of the department.

Collaboration Takes Time, Money, and Frequent Contact to Build Working Relationships

In light of recent downsizing, many state education agency personnel believe their departments are understaffed, and collaborative responsibilities are often undertaken as additional work beyond regular duties. In one state, state education agency staff described themselves as "one deep but spread a mile wide." Even the physical layout of a department can help or hinder collaboration. In one state, the state education agency was housed in two separate buildings until personnel moved recently into new facilities housed under one roof.

While building relationships is key to any collaborative effort, turnover among collaborative partners requires constant reeducation and time to build new relationships. According to one staff person, "people and priorities change; collaboration doesn't necessarily get easier or cheaper over time." As noted earlier, turnover in political leadership and resulting reprioritization or reorganization can have a significant impact on the longevity of a collaborative effort. Because it may take some time for an initiative to show results, partners can have difficulty sustaining it through a change in leadership.

Changing and Balancing Roles

State education agency staff spoke of needing to be specialists and generalists at the same time. In addition, many said they must combine their responsibilities of providing assistance and support while still having monitoring and regulatory functions. In one state education agency that seeks to strike a balance between these roles, the consolidated planning process is designed to allow schools to be more comprehensive and to blend funding, but the state education agency still must report back to the federal government on the use of program funds categorically.

Intergovernmental challenges, that is, the challenges that arise in the interaction between the federal, state, and local governments or governance entities (including school districts), sometimes raise jurisdictional issues. Education maintains a strong history of local control with formal governance bodies in place, while health and human services agencies increasingly are devolving authority once held at the federal and state levels to the local level. These changes in governance require that new relationships and new types of relationships be adopted, particularly as collaboration becomes more the norm. Each state education agency maintains its own unique relationships with school districts and schools; however, most staff spoke of trying to maintain a balance between providing some oversight and respecting local authority and decisionmaking.

Depending on the degree of hierarchy and bureaucracy in a particular state education agency, even in collaborative situations, those involved may have only limited authority to act on behalf of the department. In other words, a state education agency's participation in a collaborative effort may not be meaningful—even with competent, committed personnel—if every action must be approved at higher levels.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Committed Leadership and Setting Out a Vision for Children and Families

Support for a child and family agenda at the highest levels, through ongoing collaboration and opportunities to do so, can help to support collaborative efforts in communities. A structured forum or formal structure, such as a children's "cabinet," can facilitate that collaboration and establish collaboration as an expectation. Members of Delaware's Family Services Cabinet Council stated that Governor Carper's commitment to children and families and the Cabinet Council itself was very important to their ongoing collaborative efforts. They also stated that although Cabinet Council members do not agree about everything, they can and do work well together. Governor Carper seems to have actively sought individuals with collaboration skills when he selected members of his Cabinet.

Leadership of the state education agency around a collaborative agenda is also important. Staff from the Maryland State Department of Education cited continuity in leadership in their department as key to their ongoing efforts to support school-community collaboration. Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick has been the chief state school officer since 1991 and also served as the Special Secretary for Children, Youth, and Families in the early years of Maryland's System Reform Initiative.

However, while high-level state support for collaboration is important, state education agency staff must also find mechanisms and tools that support coordination and collaboration at the school-community level, where assessment of community needs and decisions about school improvement are made.

Flexibility and Opportunities for Comprehensiveness at the School Site and District Levels

As noted earlier, education has a long history of local control, and state education agencies are working hard to strike a balance between the roles of monitors and regulators and of designers and implementers of a system of support and accountability. Many educators agree that for schools to meet tough new standards set out by the state and to improve student achievement, schools must involve parents and community partners in needs assessment, school governance, and improvement planning. One of the most productive state roles, then, might be to facilitate local-level decisionmaking by providing flexibility and opportunities to plan comprehensively.

Schools and districts are now able to engage in more comprehensive planning through the consolidated planning process authorized in the Improving America's Schools Act. The Maryland Department of Education gives local school systems the option of submitting a consolidated application for federal and state program funds through a single consolidated plan, rather than through separate applications or plans. The department's guidelines outline the benefits of a consolidated planning process, including one planning process instead of several; one needs assessment instead of several; one due date for plans and applications; review of a variety of system, school, and stu-

dent data at the same time, allowing for a more accurate identification of goals, objectives, and strategies; less fragmentation and duplication; and better opportunities to identify federal and state requirements for waiver consideration under Maryland's ED Flex authority. Consolidated plans are also approved for three years, rather than annually, allowing for more long-range planning.

There definitely is a shared sentiment that school improvement efforts require site-based decision-making that should involve parents and other community members and partners. Schools' ability to involve the community is also part of the school report card in Maryland: the Maryland State Department of Education has built-in expectations about maintaining relationships with the surrounding community and promoting a seamless system of supports for children and families.

Other mechanisms can be employed to promote and support collaboration. The New Jersey Department of Human Services has worked in partnership with IBM to develop a statewide interagency data system, in which various service providers representing different service sectors can access a single data base for the families served. Interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding are also commonly used mechanisms at state and local levels for defining interagency collaborative working agreements.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

State education agency staff in the mid-Atlantic states are engaged in numerous collaborative efforts with colleagues within their own agencies, as well as with their counterparts in other agencies, such as health and human services. In addition, state education agency staff are increasingly working with and supporting collaborations at the school-community level, where diverse and interdisciplinary groups of professionals are working together to support children and families. The increase in collaborative activities in recent years is testament to educators' recognition that they can no longer operate in isolation if they hope to guarantee students' success in school.

However, many of these efforts, albeit collaborative in nature, are numerous themselves and operating in isolation. State education agency staff's efforts are often categorical as defined by particular federal or state funding streams and programs. Yet the promise of school-community collaboration may rest in state education agencies' ability to facilitate schools' and school districts' comprehensive approaches to serving children and their families. State education agencies can support these approaches by maintaining at the state level a vision for the well-being of the state's children and families, making the connection between comprehensive approaches to supporting children and families and student achievement, and providing the funding and flexibility for schools and communities to determine how best to meet their own needs.

State agency staff from education as well as other departments point to the ongoing need for sound evaluation data that show the linkages between school-community collaboration and improvements in student achievement levels and student well-being. Data on the effectiveness of such programs are either unavailable or of questionable quality, due to the number and complexity of the variables that contribute to student performance. For many school-community collaboration

efforts, evaluation may not even be attempted or participants may lack the expertise and resources to engage in high-quality evaluation. State education agencies could use assistance in finding a research base that supports the effectiveness of such programs and avenues for sharing information about best practices with districts and schools. Having access to such information could allow state education agencies to provide funding and support for research-based approaches to improving student achievement.

How programs are funded through the federal and state governments often drives the operations and organization of state education agencies. State education agency staff also seek information about creative financing strategies for school-community collaboration. These should include strategies that consolidate existing education funding streams to allow for flexibility and comprehensiveness at the school and district levels, as well as those that involve collaborative work with other state agencies that provide access to funds outside traditional education budgets.

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